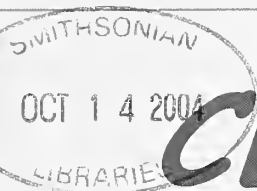


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Lynne Mattocks Lucas



CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 50

October 2004

Number 5

Winter Meeting Returns to Atlantic Beach January 28-30

By Judy Murray

To the beach! One of my favorite places to be in winter and I hope you feel the same. Our winter meeting will be held January 28-30, 2005 in Atlantic Beach, NC. There should be many shorebirds, gulls, passerines, and maybe an alcid or two. At previous meetings in Carteret County we've seen as many as 150 species including: Long-billed Curlew, Red Phalarope, Eurasian Wigeon, and several gulls—Glaucous, Black-headed, and Thayer's. This weekend should be no different. Maybe a few other rarities will show up!

Headquarters for the meeting will be the Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel (2717 W. Fort Macon Rd, PO Box 3040, Atlantic Beach, NC 28512, 252-240-1155 or 1-800-624-8875). Room rates are \$65.00 per night single or double occupancy, plus a 12% room tax. The CBC rate is valid until December 27, 2004. All reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or advanced payment of a first night's room including tax. Be sure to mention you are with CBC. All rooms have a hair dryer, coffeemaker, and refrigerator. The rate does not include a continental breakfast, however, there is a restaurant in the hotel where you can purchase breakfast.

The speaker Friday night will be John Fussell, author of *A Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina* and *Finding Birds in Carteret County*. John's topic will be "Birding and Bird Habitats in Carteret County." John grew up in Carteret County so he is an expert on the birds of the area and where to find them.

Saturday night Mike Tove will be our speaker. His program will be "Gull Identification: Their Molts and How to Age Them." Mike, who is the author of the book *Guide to the Offshore Wildlife of the Northern Atlantic*, is an authority on birds in general and pelagic/gulls/shorebirds in particular.

John Fussell is planning the field trips, which may include Cape Lookout, Bird Shoal, Croatan National Forest, and some new areas. The descriptions of specific trips and pre-registration for them will be included in the next *CBC Newsletter*. See you at the beach!

Upcoming CBC Meetings

Blowing Rock, NC - April 29-May 1, 2005
Charleston, SC - September 30-October 2, 2005

CBC Memory

By Charlotte Goedsche

While on leave of absence from teaching in January 1999, and looking forward to the CBC meeting at the Outer Banks, I decided it was finally time for me to take on the challenge of gull identification.

Knowing that preparation and probability are two of a birder's best friends, I consulted the frequency graphs in CBC-member John Fussell's *A Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina*. Of the 12 gulls that might be seen on the Outer Banks in January, two were listed as "rare" or "very rare." I wrote down the other 10, whose frequency ranged from "common" to "occasional." (While it was very unlikely that I would see an "occasional" species, it was not out of the question, so I included the two "occasionals," Glaucous and Iceland.)

Next I perused the gull section of a field guide and learned that winter adult gulls had six important field marks: size; colors of bill, feet/legs, and back/wings; and patterns of head and wingtips. I wrote my ten gulls down on a large piece of paper in order of size, starting with the "uncommon" Little Gull (11"), and ending with the "common" Great Black-backed Gull (30"). Then I added the other field marks in columns: Bill, Feet/Legs, Back/Wings, Wingtips, Head. Very interesting. All the gulls with pink feet and legs were large and had yellow bills. The two smallest gulls had red feet and legs and black bills. Did that mean something? Had I discovered a secret universal principle?

Clearly, gulling was a mystical endeavor. I carried my gull grid around until I had committed it to memory.

Finally, on January 29, as the sun peeped over the horizon at Nags Head, I hurried down before breakfast to look for gulls. The cold wind nearly knocked me off my feet. I tried to hide from the wind behind a corner of the Comfort Inn, clinging to my tripod for dear life. I ignored the grains of sand that bit into my face, watched Great Black-backed Gulls on the wing fighting the wind, and... what was that very large all-white gull flying away from me? Holy Moses! A Glaucous Gull! An "occasional" Glaucous Gull! WOW!

For a long moment, I was filled with a sense of accomplishment. Because I was well prepared, I had succeeded in identifying an unusual gull. But then, slowly, a thought crept into my mind: who would ever believe that I had spotted a Glaucous Gull? A mountain birder finds a Glaucous Gull? I sighed, returned the scope and tripod to my third-floor room, and walked down the corridor. A vaguely familiar looking man joined me and we chatted while waiting for the elevator. It was Jon Dunn, nationally known bird expert, who had come to the CBC meeting to give the evening presentation. After introducing himself, Jon told me that just five minutes earlier he had had a state bird from his hotel window—a Glaucous Gull! I smiled, and the sense of accomplishment returned and kept me warm all day.

New CBC Members

Michael Berkoben-Durham, NC
Lower Neuse Bird Club-New Bern, NC

Betsy & Al Gumpert-Asheville, NC
Charles A. Harrison-Charleston, SC

Olwen Jarvis-New Bern, NC

Ryan S. Mays-Christiansburg, VA

Steve & Susan McInnis-Columbia, SC

Harvey & Jewel Prendeville-Southport, NC

Robin Righettini & Jan Vanauken-Chester, SC

John & Nancy Schultz-Winston-Salem, NC

Steve & Liz Semanchuk-Weaverville, NC

Harry Timmons-Nags Head, NC

Rachel Wood-Charlotte, NC

Deceased Members

Jean Caldwell-Washington, NC

R.M. Hanckel-Charleston, SC

Feathered Features

NC Partners in Flight The steering committee and state working group meeting will be held near Charlotte, NC at the Reedy Creek Nature Preserve in northern Mecklenburg County on Wednesday, October 20, 2004 from 1:30 pm until 4:30 pm. Sponsored by Mecklenburg County's Park and Recreation Department, tentative speakers include researchers and biologists from UNC-Charlotte, Davidson College, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. For more information contact Mark Johns at PO Box 564, Cary, NC 27512 or johnsme@mindspring.com.

A **Cape Verde Shearwater**, *Calonectris edwardsii*, was spotted among a flock Cory's Shearwaters on the August 15, 2004 pelagic birding trip from Hatteras, NC. According to Brian Patteson, they were able to study the bird for several minutes and many pictures were taken. This is probably the first record for North America and the western North Atlantic! To view the photos or to learn more about Brian's pelagic trips, visit his website at <http://www.seabirding.com> or call 252-986-1363.

In July the National Audubon Society announced **Roseate Terns** nesting on Maine's Outer Green Island for first time in nearly a century. Steven Kress, Project Director, reported 11 nesting pairs of Roseate Terns this year, as well as 695 nesting pairs of Common Terns. Kress credits the island's growing population of Common Terns as a likely factor in attracting their rarer cousins. To learn more about the Seabird Restoration Program visit <http://www.audubon.org/bird/puffin/islandnews.html>.

According to the American Bird Conservancy's *BirdWire* News Bulletin, "Five pairs of **California Condors** are currently incubating eight eggs in both the Arizona and California reintroduction populations. Last season's chick, the first to be hatched in the wild in more than 20 years is doing well and socializing with other birds. The total condor population, both wild and captive, now stands at 245 - a remarkable achievement given that at one point the species was down to just 21 birds."

Wings Over Water November 2-7, 2004 One last reminder about this popular bird festival. Call 252-441-8144 or visit their website at www.wingsoverwater.org for more information.

Project FeederWatch Become a "Citizen Scientist" and have fun counting birds (like chickadees!) at your feeder by signing up for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch. Count birds at your feeders from November through March. Cost is \$15 (\$12 for lab members). For more information call 607-254-2427 or visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw. Let's increase the data from the Carolinas this year!



Carolina Chickadee, by
Lynne Mattocks Lucas

Christmas Bird Count Information Needed

The November issue of the *CBC Newsletter* will include a list of Christmas Bird Counts in both Carolinas. Compilers, please send your count information (location, date, complier name, phone number, and email) by **October 15** to: Karen Bearden, 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612 or chickadeebirders@earthlink.net. Thank you!

At the August Executive Committee meeting **Kent Fiala** agreed to take over the role as the Carolina Bird Club Website Editor, along with continuing his position as the Editor of *The Chat*. Thanks to Kent for his tremendous volunteer time! You can reach Kent at fiala@ipass.net or by calling 919-969-9082.

Special birthday wishes to CBC member **Dr. Thomas (Tom) L. Quay**, Professor Emeritus of Zoology at North Carolina State University, who turned 90 on August 23, 2004. Tom has been a CBC member since 1938, just one year after the founding of the Club!

The Secret Spot *By Robin Carter*

Today I visited one of my secret birding spots, Faulkner Mountain. This is a small Piedmont monadnock, sticking up perhaps 120 feet higher than the surrounding countryside. Faulkner Mountain is in the Edgefield District of Sumter National Forest, South Carolina, on the Edgefield–Saluda county line.

Faulkner Mountain is a rocky hill with a good oak–hickory forest. There is a rocky but fairly good forest road to the top, which is just a half-mile or so from the nearest paved road (Faulkner Mountain Road). It's not a particularly good birding spot. When I last visited this spot (about 10 years ago) there was a nice view off to the west, towards the Savannah River. Today the view is obscured by maturing trees. There are a few old beer cans here and there, but not too many. Mostly it's just trees and rocks. I sat on a boulder for a half hour and listened. The only bird singing was a Red-eyed Vireo. It was quiet except for a slight wind and an occasional jet plane flying overhead, probably on approach to Atlanta, 120 miles to the west.

So this is my secret birding spot? I remember when I was shown my first secret birding spot. It was January 1975. I was a young, poor visiting assistant professor at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. I had no car, but somehow I had gotten hooked up with Bob Newman (Dr. Robert Newman at the LSU Museum of Zoology). Bob had a great car, a huge Mercedes diesel, but he wasn't supposed to drive it, due to his heart condition. So I was the driver. Just about every weekend from January through April of 1975 we drove off to some corner of Louisiana birding. I was a rank beginner being tutored by one of the greatest ornithologists in the world!

On one of our first trips to Cameron Parish in southwest Louisiana Bob looked over at me in a conspiratorial fashion and said, "I guess it's O.K. to show you the secret spot." He then directed me through a series of turns on bad gravel roads of some oil field until we got to a small impoundment filled with shorebirds. Bob wanted to get some species (I think it was Stilt Sandpiper) for his January, 1975 Louisiana list. Whatever we were looking for was right there in the impoundment, a great stakeout.

I later learned that this "secret" spot was well known to dozens of Louisiana birders. As I took more and more birding trips with Bob he showed me other secret spots. Once, when we unexpectedly found a Common Ground-Dove in Cameron Parish Bob even declared, "I guess this is a new secret spot". Some of these secret spots were great birding spots, but others had few if any birds (if that's possible in Louisiana).

A secret birding spot may or may not be a birding hot spot. It may or may not be well known. But a secret birding spot always has a little of the magic that made us birders in the first place.

When you find a secret birding spot put a big X on your heart's treasure map. And if you have a birding companion who just might be trustworthy take him or her to the secret birding spot. Who knows what you will find.

Birding Advertisements

Birding business owners are encouraged to submit free advertisements for inclusion in the *CBC Newsletter*, up to twice a year.

Send your information to
chickadeebirders@earthlink.net.

*foggy dawn—
a pileated's scream
pierces the silence*

*Haiku poem by CBC member Linda Jeannette Ward
Frogpond XXI:No.1, 1998*

Birding at Shackleford Banks

By Karen Bearden



Susan and Rich Boyd, Ruth and Russell Roberson, and Jack Fennell at Shackleford Banks, photo by Karen Bearden

Generally you expect to have hot, humid weather the first week in August, but birders on the CBC bonus trips to Shackleford Banks were lucky with a passing cold front the day before the weekend trips. The weather was in the pleasant 60s with a light breeze in the morning as we took the Local Yokels ferry from Harkers Island to the east side of Shackleford Banks, with the Cape Lookout Lighthouse in view. With a heavy response and eight people on the waiting list, leader John Fussell agreed to lead a second trip on Sunday.

Little Blue and Tricolored Herons and Snowy and Great Egrets dotted the shoreline and marshy areas, with a few Whimbrel and Marbled Godwit mixed in. Black Skimmer and six species of terns, including Sandwich and Black, were seen. Birders walked through sticky, mucky sand (someone commented it seemed like quick-sand!) and up to knee-high water to explore the area. The two key birds most people were looking for were Long-billed Curlew and Reddish Egret. Our Saturday trip saw two, maybe three curlews, but the Sunday trip also found the Reddish Egret! On Saturday birders were surprised to see a Common Nighthawk, plus a soaring Red-tailed Hawk and Osprey. Red Knots still had a touch of red on their bellies and Black-bellied Plovers were a treat to see with their stunning black bellies. Birders were also treated to adorable Piping and Wilson's Plovers, Glossy Ibis, Short-billed Dowitcher, and the eye-catching American Oystercatcher. The two groups saw a total of 62 species.



Long-billed Curlew, by Giff Beaton

THANKS so much to John for leading these TWO trips for us! The Local Yokels ferry has already been reserved for trips at our winter meeting in Atlantic Beach in January!

Bird Count Experiences By Ramona Snavelly

Everyone of us should experience the trials, tribulations, unexpected events, and rewards of participating in Christmas and Spring Bird Counts.

I, personally, went on my first Count in 1964 and have counted every spring and winter through 2004. Forty years; all of them unique in their own way. One of my first experiences came in the early years of counting birds. Planning to meet my team members at Reynolda Gardens, I arrived early in the morning only to find several young men in the marshy lake busily trying to club and kill ducks. I was so outraged that I told them I would give them

exactly one minute to leave before I called the police. Strangely enough, they turned and ran away. A few minutes later, it suddenly occurred to me that here I was, a five foot tall woman threatening four large teenaged young men! Very poor judgment on my part!

On one Count, I was meeting the other members of our team at the early hour of 5 am. As I drove in the darkness, a police patrol car followed me in, stopped me and asked, "Mam, may we help you?" So, after several minutes of trying to convince them that I was counting birds, they cautiously watched from a distance until some of the other team members arrived with binoculars and scopes in

(continued on the following page)

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hand. Fortunately, the law enforcement officers decided we were just harmless “nuts”. (At that time in life, birdwatchers were looked upon as being a little “odd”.) Maybe we still are!

As bird study has become more popular and accepted, these interesting experiences with the general population has dramatically declined. Perhaps, after all these decades of counting birds, we are now accepted as hard-working, law abiding “nutty birdwatchers!”

Summer Kite Trip a Success

By John Cely

There's always an element of gambling involved when predicting bird behavior, and the stakes are even higher when folks have come from 200 miles away or more to observe it. But the Swallow-tailed Kites of Allendale County, South Carolina cooperated and Carolina Bird Clubers were treated to a real show for the July 24th Swallow-tailed Kite field trip. We estimated 35-40 kites swarming over the large cow pasture, foraging on June bugs, dragonflies, and other low-flying insects. What makes this spot so special is that the birds are foraging at ground level and observers are able to see views of the birds rarely seen elsewhere.

Based on some radio telemetry research I've been involved with, these kites are probably coming from the Savannah River Swamp, 10-12 miles away, to feed on the insect swarms. Swallow-tails are closely tied to floodplains and swampy areas where they nest in tall cypress or pines, and feed on anoles, green snakes, frogs, and are not above taking nestling birds (sometimes they snatch the entire nest; Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seemed favored this year).

However, being a social species, they have an interesting group behavior of moving into the uplands in mid- to late morning, after the dew has dried and the hot weather has stirred up the bugs. These feeding flocks tend to get bigger as the summer progresses, as both the females and fledglings leave the swampy nesting areas to join in with the adult males. The Swallow-tails, often joined by their distant cousins, the Mississippi

Kite, will forage on insects for an hour or so, then split up and head back to the swamp and their breeding territories.

Sometimes the group foraging behavior can be so predictable that you can almost set your clock by it. The hours between 10 am and 12 noon seem to be favored. Pastures, hay fields, and even sod farms, are choice foraging spots, as are marshes and wetland impoundments such as found at the Santee Delta and the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, where we've counted up to 35 kites foraging along the Wildlife Drive. Interestingly, kites seem to favor some foraging spots over others, despite their equal appearance to our eyes, and will often use the same area continuously for several years.

Most of our Allendale kites were gone by 11:00 and from there we visited a wetland mitigation site belonging to a farmer that lived just around the corner from the kite pasture. The wetland was a beautiful Carolina bay fringed with cypress trees and full of water and lily pads. This bay, like so many others, had been drained and farmed for many years, but the farmer plugged the drainage ditches and the bay appears well on its way to recovery. We were hoping to pick up a Purple Gallinule but no luck, although we did see a couple of moorhen chicks and some Anhingas drying their wings.

After a respite at Bea's in Allendale, we stopped at Lake Warren State Park on the way back. From the dock that juts out in the lake, we saw one large alligator, several moorhen, a Snowy Egret, an immature Little Blue Heron, and one Least Bittern from a distance flying across the lake. Some of us saw what looked like a rail, perhaps King Rail size, slinking through the marsh grass, but only had very brief looks. There was also a lonesome mystery duck in the middle of the lake that could have been a juvenile Wood Duck.

From there we stopped by Carroll Richard's home in Hampton hoping to pick up a male Painted Bunting that had been coming to her feeder, but by now the hot weather had settled in and the bunting was probably cooling off in some thicket. Thanks to Dan Connelly, Brooks Lawton, and Carroll Richard for helping make the trip a success.

CBC Bonus Field Trips



Northern Pintail, by Lynn Barber

Lake Mattamuskeet November 13-14

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge is legendary for its variety and numbers of wintering waterfowl. In recent years, a variety of passerines have also been found lingering in the thick vegetation at the refuge—especially along the causeway across the lake. We can expect to see many waterfowl species, including Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal. We'll also search for possible Orange-crowned Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, and maybe the Black-headed Gull will make a return visit this year. Cost of the trip is \$10 per person and limited to 16 participants.

Our trip will begin at noon on Saturday at the refuge headquarters (meet at the entrance road off of Highway 94, just north of the intersection with Highway 264: look for the refuge sign just before Highway 94 crosses the lake). We'll bird the impoundments along the dirt road into the refuge and then time permitting head back to the causeway (Highway 94) and bird north to the opposite end of the lake ending near Fairfield. We'll try our luck at

Lake Landing hoping to see the swans and geese as they return to the lake to roost. We can eat supper together at the Engelhard Cafe Saturday night.

On Sunday we'll meet once again at the refuge entrance at 7 am to look for passerines along the Wildlife Drive. The plan is to bird until noon, but for those who want to linger longer there will be more to see.

A few lodging possibilities:

Hotel Engelhard, 1-800-290-5311 or 252-925-2001

Hyde-Away Motel, 252-926-8101

The Sadler Inn, 252-926-2841

Thomasina's B&B, 252-943-2097

Sally Dixon's B&B, 252-925-7921

Cuttrell Inn B&B, 1-800-263-1708

Bring drinks and snacks. Dress appropriately for the weather. Sturdy shoes or hiking boots would be in order for Lake Landing as we will do a good bit of walking—all on level refuge roads. For questions and reservations for the trip please contact Judy Murray before you send in your registration money at 919-942-2985 or jmurray@unc.edu.

****As of early September there are still two spaces available on the Southeast NC Coast trip on Saturday, October 23.** For more information or to reserve your place for the trip, contact Stephen Harris at 910-791-9034 or srharris@mindspring.com. The November CBC trip to **Trinidad and Tobago** is full.

Carolina Bird Club Registration Form

Bonus Field Trips

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

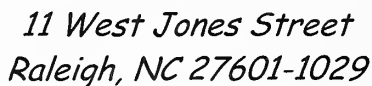
Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

Registration for each bonus field trip costs \$10/pp paid in advance.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Southeast NC Coast - Oct. 23 trip**.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Lake Mattamuskeet - November 13-14 trip**.

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 5009 Crown Point Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409.



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October 23, Southeast NC Coast
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Steve Patterson, Pickens

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